

*Charissa avilaria* (Reisser, 1836)

BEIRA ALTA: Covão do Boi, 4.9.2001

*Eupithecia tenuiata* (Hübner, 1813)

BEIRA ALTA: Rio Mondego near Videmonte, 5.9.2001

*Eilema pseudocomplana* (Daniel, 1939)

BEIRA ALTA: Caldas de Manteigas, 6.9.2001

*Catocala fraxini* (Linnaeus, 1758)

BEIRA ALTA: Poço do Inferno, 9.9.2001

*Amphipyra tetra* (Fabricius, 1787)

BEIRA ALTA: Poço do Inferno, 9.9.2001

*Noctua tirrenica* Biebinger, Speidel & Hanigk, 1983

BEIRA ALTA: Poço do Inferno, 9.9.2001

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### **Rearing the Fox Moth *Macrothylacia rubi* (L.) (Lep.: Lasiocampidae), an alternative strategy**

I read with interest the account by Harry Eales (*antea*: 65-66) of his eventual successful overwintering and rearing of larvae of the Fox moth. At the risk of boring my friends in Yorkshire who have heard this story before, it may be of interest to recount the circumstances of my own success on the single attempt that I have made to rear this species.

On 28 May 1990, my friends Frank Botterill and John Newbould made an evening visit to Little Howden Moor, near Sheffield, during the course of which a female Fox moth was attracted to their m.v. light. It was temporarily enclosed in a jar by John and subsequently released at the end of the evening.

On the evening of 22 June the three of us met up to run m.v. lights at Anston Stones Wood, near Rotherham and during the evening as John took out a jar from his bag he noticed that there were some small larvae in the bottom. The explanation was evident, the female Fox moth had laid some ova in the jar and these had fairly recently hatched. Rather than have him tip out the survivors then and there, bearing in mind that there were no records of Fox moth at that site, I offered to take them home and attempt to rear them. I placed them, about a dozen in all, in a plastic fish tank covered with nylon stocking where they fed readily on the bramble *Rubus fruticosus* that I provided and grew quite quickly. Towards the end of September they appeared full grown and showed little interest in feeding so I placed several layers of newspaper in the bottom of the tank together with a couple of sprays of foodplant (just in case any were still hungry) and sited the tank in a sheltered position on the ground between a wooden boundary fence and my garden shed. I reared a large square of plywood against the fence, over the tank, to provide some protection against heavy rain. The larvae soon disappeared under the newspaper and I left them alone.

It was after a period of strong winds and heavy rain that, sometime during February 1991, I looked round the back of my shed and saw to my dismay that the plywood had been dislodged by the wind leaving the tank with no protection, consequently it was filled with rainwater to a depth of over 15cms. I drained off the water and carefully parted the extremely soggy newspapers and was surprised to see apparently healthy larvae. In fact only two larvae seemed to have succumbed, whether this was as a result of their forced submersion it was impossible to say. The newspapers were so soggy that replacing them without unduly disturbing the larvae was impossible, so I drained off as much water as I could and returned the tank behind the shed and replaced the plywood. During sunny periods in the early spring I placed the tank in an open position and larvae were seen briefly before they pupated, most among the newspapers (now considerably drier!) but some in the corners of the tank. In due course all the moths emerged between 21 and 25 May 1991.

The moorland haunts of this moth, at least in northern England, are often extremely wet, especially during the winter months, and in the wild overwintering larvae will presumably often be at risk of inundation. That they cope well with these conditions is borne out by my larvae which may have been completely submerged for up to three or four weeks without suffering significant losses. Mr Eales utilisation of *Sphagnum* moss exposed to the elements together with my own experience suggests that it is beneficial to keep the larvae in wet conditions during overwintering, even though this would appear to fly in the face of conventional wisdom for keeping mould at bay.—H. E. BEAUMONT, 37 Melton Green, West Melton, Rotherham, South Yorkshire S63 6AA.

### **Moths: some recent records of advanced or extended flight periods and of bivoltinism**

On 13 January 2002, a female December Moth *Poecilocampa populi* (L.) (Lasiocampidae) was captured in my m.v. trap at Garston, near Watford, Hertfordshire (VC 20). The flight period of this species is usually quoted as between October and December, but J. W. Tutt (1901-1905. *Practical Hints for the Field Lepidopterist* – reprinted 1994), states (Part I, p.6) that “late imagines of *P. populi* are still to be obtained at light, if mild, during the first fortnight of January”. Plant (2001, *Ent. Rec.* **113**: 63-64) reports persistence until 6 January 2001 at a site in South Hampshire.

Plant (*op. cit.*) also collates a number of records of Spring Usher *Agriopsis leucophaearia* (D. & S.) (Geometridae) during January 2001, involving a total of nine English vice-counties north to South-west Yorkshire. As Plant observes, most sources list the flight period for Spring Usher as mid-February to mid-March, although Barrett (1901, *Lepidoptera of the British Islands* **VII**: 242) adds “in very forward seasons at the end of January”. Tutt (*op. cit.*, Part II, p.1) reports that regular searching of park fences at Calcot (in Berkshire) in 1890 “produced fresh specimens of *Hybernia* (= *Agriopsis*) *leucophaearia* abundantly from January 16th to March 6th”; the first date invites comparison with the recent records reviewed by Plant.